यहां मैं खास तौर से पलामू का जिक्र करना चाहता हूं, बिहार में, जहां पर कि अब महुआ के वृक्ष छोड़कर, जहां लाख की खेती होती है, पलाश के ऊपर, दूसरा कोई वृक्ष नहीं बचा । वहां पर बहुत घना जंगल थ । तो इस प्रकार के क्षेत्रों के लिए क्या आप राज्य सरकारों के साथ मिलकर विशेष योजना बनाएंगे, जो समेकित हो, कांप्रिहैंसिव हो और जिसमें हर प्रकार के पहलू को ध्यान में रखते हुए आप वहां पर वन संपदा को पुनर्जीवित करने के लिए कदम उठायेंगे ?

SHRI KAMAL NATH: Sir, I share the hon. Member's concern about forestry in India. But one of the constraints has been meagre financial allocation. In the Eighth Plan, we have an allocation of Rs. 4082 crores—Rs. 525 crores in the Central sector and Rs. 3,557 crores in the State sector. This is roughly one-third of what is required to take on forestry in a big way. Sir, through you, I would also like to inform the hon. Member that this degradation which was taking place, this afforestation which was taking place, has been reversed and I think, perhaps, we are the only country in the world, which has afforested for the first time in the year 1991-92 two million hectares approximately and these are not figures which have been planted in the files and trees not planted on the ground. I have subjected them to check by the NGO's by retired servicemen and we have got a feedback on the authenticity of these figures. We are making efforts in this regard. The hon. Member specially mentioned the case of Palamau. I shall certainly look into that. There is a focus on our most sensitive forest areas, in our ecologically sensitive areas. These have been segregated. We have schemes, both under our existing projects, and those which are linked with bilateral and multilateral funding schemes.

Signing of MOU between India and Oman

*463. SHRI SURESH KALMADI: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that three separate memoranda of understanding dealing with the setting up of refineries and for the supply of the Natural Gas have been signed between India and Oman; and

(b) if so, what are the details thereof and the locations of the refineries proposed to be set up?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (CAPT. SATISH SHARMA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Two of these relate to the setting up of two joint venture refineries, each with a capacity of 6 MMTPA, one with HPCL in Western India and the other with RPCL in Central India. Another M.O.U. relates to exploration of possibilities of supply of Natural Gas from OMAN and other sources through a pipeline to India.

SHRI SURESH KALMADI: Sir, I think what happened in the case of Oman is a good omen for the country The signing of the MOU expeditiously for a 1,400 kilometer gas pipeline is indeed a good sign. I would like to know by what time the feasibility study would be completed and what the costs would be. Since you have involved the HPC and Bharat Petroleum in these refineries, I would like to know whether the public would also be taking part in these in equity terms. I would also like to know whether the supply would be sufficient or you would still have to go to other Gulf countries like Qatar, Iran, etc. for similar projects so that we have enough supply of crude and gas.

CAPT. SATISH SHARMA: Sir, I thank the hon. Member for complimenting the step. I have set up an expert group to examine all offers received or joint venture. The expert group includes top specialists. The other side, i.e. Oman, is also setting up technical groups, expert groups. They are going to meet and discuss various issues relating to these massive projects of Oman-India gas pipeline and only then we will get a clear idea about the time-frame. What I understand from the talks that I had with them in Oman is that the engineering work takes about a year and the sub-sea pipeline section can actually be done at a faster pace than the overground section. After the completion of the engineering work, a project of this nature will take about 3 to 4 years to complete. As regards the other part of the queseion, i.e., crude supply to these two refineries which are being set up by Oman in collaboration with Hindustan Petroleum and Bharat Petroleum, Oman is keen to supply crude. They want to supply crude to these refineries. The crude supply to these refineries will be assured and there will be no problem. As regards similar projects which the hon. Member has mentioned, besides the MOU signed with Oman, we are getting similar offers from Iran, Qatar, etc., and we are discussing with them because our demand is bigger than what Oman can supply. We are keeping all options open and we are negotiating with other parties also.

SHRI SURESH KALMADI: A cause for concern in this particular project is that the pipeline would be passing through Pakistan. You are aware, Sir, the first targets in times of war are the oil pipelines and other installations. What are the checks and precautions taken by the Government on this issue? What is the spin-off for the Indian companies? Will the Indian companies be involved in laying of the pipes? There is expertise after the laying of the HBI pipeline. I would like to know whether a separate committee would be set up by you to ensure that Indian companies and various Indian agencies get adequate benefit from these projects. I think Shell has got 51 per cent shareholding in the Oman oil company. This point should also be kept in mind.

CAPT. SATISH SHARMA: A project of this nature, 900-mile long sub-sea pipeline project, would cost around 4.5 billion U.S. dollars. They will fill finance it; they will construct it; they will bring the pipes up to our international borders. Obviously, there will be a major international pipeline consortium which will lay the pipeline. I can assure the Member that they are quite capable of looking after the interests of their investment. As far as Pakistan is concerned, we don't have to worry on that count. They have their own treaties. Oman has treaties, Qatar has treaties, Iran has treaties with Pakistan in that area. Besides this when they get into the act, they will make investments on their own. We don't have to worry on that front. That is what I understand. As far as the other part of the question about involvement of Indian companies in the construction of pipeline in this massive project is concerned, I can assure the hon. Member that wherever possible and wherever the Indian companies have expertise, all efforts will be male to see that they are involved in it.

SHRI S. VIDULTHALAI VIRUMBI: Sir, when the Government is giving importance to import of natural gas, I would like to know from the Government what development is taking place in regard to the Zero Flame Project because Rs. 1800 crores worth of gas is spent unused? We are all aware that gas is in flame. There is a project called Zero Flame Project. I would to know...

MR. CHAIRMAN: But the question is about Oman. Unless the Minister wants to answer....

SHRI S. VIDULTHALAI VIRUMBI: Sir, this is a part of the question.

CAPT. SATISH SHARMA: As I mentioned earlier, a massive gas flaring project is already underway. All the investments from the multilateral agencies have been cleared and the project is already underway. Once that project is completed, flaring will come to almost—as they say—zero level as it is taking place, right now, in the Bombay High.

SHRI N. E. BALARAM: Sir, I understand from the reply given by the hon. Minister that MoU has already been signed. I would like to know whether there is any stipulation on the question of prices in that MoU. The price of oil and natural gas is fictuating in the internatioanal market. I want to know whether there is any specific condition or specific mention about prices in that MoU. If so, what are the details?

CAPT. SATISH SHARMA: Sir the Memorandum of Understanding is only an expression of intent to undertake a project. As I mentioned earlier. I have constituted an expert group. Our expert group and their expert group will get together in due course and along with other issues, the issue of price will also be discussed.

SHRI JAGESH DESAI: Sir, I am very happy that this kind of projects are being undertaken by the Government. Sir, petroleum products, gas and power can be obtained from any source, whether private, public or foreign collaboration. I am fully in agreement with this policy. Sir, gas is being burnt in Bombay High because some industries are not lifting it. That is why it is being burnt. I remember corrective your predecessor said that we shall cancel such contract and we will give these contracts to other industries. I woud like to know from the Minister whether the Government has cancelled such contracts or is going to do it so that crores and crores of rupees which are being vested can be saved.

CAPT. SATISH SHARMA: I can assure the hon. Member that if there are companies and industries who are not lifting gas which was allotted to them, surely there are many in the queue who are ready to take gas.

DR. JINENDRA KUMAR JAIN: Sir, in fixing the price of various petroleum commodities, market is usually governend by the principle of supply and demand. I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether for the last one year or so this is sellers market or buyer's market.

CAPT. SATISH SHARMA: Sir, presently, fortunately for our country the petroleum market world wide is soft which means favourable for us and the indications are it will remain so, fortunately for India in the near future.

DR. JINENDRA KUMAR JAIN: So all this propaganda that Ayodhya is adverstly affecting our chances of petroleum is based on untruth .... *(Interruptions)* ...

MR. CHAIRMAN: That is beyond the question... *(Interruptions)* ...

DR. JINENDRA KUMAR JAIN: Since it is a sellers market, the propaganda is absolutely and blatantly false... *(Interruptions)* ..

MR. CHAIRMAN: This is a statement only. The Minister need not answer.

CAPT. SATISH SHARMA: No, Sir, I want to answer. ..

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Minister is answering.. .*(Interruptions)* .. ..

CAPT. SATISH SHARMA: Let me assure the Member, whether it is Ayodhya or the Bombay riots nothing can stop India from progressing, from moving in the direction of improvement, I signed the MoU with the Sultanate of Oman one day after the Bombay incident. The MoU for the

gas pipeline was signed one day after the Bombay incident happened. I was in Oman on that day and we signed the agreement one day after. So nothing will stop us. (*Interruptions*).

DR. JINENDRA KUMAR JAIN: So you are proving my point.. .. (*interruptions*) ...

*464. [*The Quesioner* (Shri H. *Hanumanthappa was absent. For answer vide* col..... *infra*]

Action Plan for the Himalayas

*465. DR. ISHWAR CHANDRA GUPTA: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether action plan for Himalayas has been prepared;

(b) if so, the salient feature of the plan;

(c) by when it is likely to be implemented;

(d) the States likely to be covered under the plan; and

(e) whether with the implementation of the action plan activities of the on-going projects in the affected State would come to a halt?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI KAMAL NATH): (a) The Govid Ballabh Pant Institute of Himalayan Environment and Development a autonomous organisation of the Ministry of Environment & Forests has prepared an Action Plan for the Himalaya.

(b) A statement is laid on the table of the House. (*See* below).

(c) The Action Plan has been sent to all the concerned Government agencies, Institutions and the Universities in the Himalayan region to keep the identified priority areas in view while implementing the development activities.

(d) The Action Plan covers the Himalayan States *viz.* Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur; Meghalaya, Tripura; Mizoram and the Hill Districts of Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and Assam.

(e) The Action Plan is intended to strengthen the mechanism of ecologically sound economic deveopment and not to negate the development activities.

Statement

The salient features of othe action plan are given beow:

—Geological instability interacting with a complex of problems manifest fragility to the Himalayan ecosystem.

—Data on problems like denudation, siltation, hydrological imbalances and floods suffer from the drawbacks, precision and the regional qualifications are found to be quite low.

—Positive points of traditional resource production and use system needs strengthening through science and technology inputs.

—The mountain trees are more productive than others, the existence of a rich tree germplasm must be recognised and realized for future research and development.

—All the partners in the development process should review their presenty common role and change it in the direction of desirability.

—It is difficult for the people to come to terms with the ecological approach immediately until we change the educational pattern.

—Lack of hydrological information and technology for designing suitable intake structures and water harvesting and supply systems.